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SUBJECT: CRITICAL COVERAGE OF SECRETARY RICE'S VISIT IN
INDEPENDENT PRESS; PRAISE FOR PEACEKEEPERS TO SUDAN;
EGYPTIAN MEDIA THEMES, JUNE 19 TO 26

REF: CAIRO 4709

1. Summary: Secretary Rice's visit to Egypt continued to receive positive coverage in the pro-government press; however, commentary in the opposition and independent press took a more critical stance. One independent commentator dismissed the Secretary's calls for democratic reform in Egypt as the latest "fashion." A stridently anti-American commentator claimed the U.S. wanted "chaos," not democracy, in Egypt. All independent newspapers offered impartial, though varying, accounts of the Secretary's visit with Egyptian opposition leaders. Reports of violence in Iraq appeared in print and TV media coverage on June 25, alongside further criticism of the U.S. military presence. The pro-government press highlighted Egypt's hosting of a Sudanese peace accord signing ceremony and the deployment of Egyptian troops to Sudan, complete with images of President Mubarak inspecting the troops. Egypt's private educational system came in for criticism on a popular Egyptian TV program for relying too much on computers in the classroom. End summary.

2. Secretary Rice's visit to Egypt: While the pro-government media continued put a positive spin on Secretary Rice's visit to Egypt (reftel), the opposition and independent press weighed in later in the week with critical coverage. The chief editor of opposition Nasserite Al Araby (circulation: 20,000) on June 26 called the Secretary's June 20 American University in Cairo (AUC) speech a "political prescription" and asked that Egyptians themselves "demand democracy and freedom," since the U.S. was "only looking out for its own interests" and "the Mubarak regime wants to rule forever." The editor of anti-American weekly Al-Osboa (circulation: 50,000) criticized Secretary Rice's visit, claiming, "America does not want

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freedom, but agents in every alley and street. America wants chaos. When Dr. Rice talked at AUC, we knew she would not apologize for the desecration of the Koran." Meanwhile, the founder and editor of weekly independent Al Fagr (circulation: 50,000) claimed on June 26 that "the democracy which the Americans are calling for is like the newest 'look' in fashion. It is an imported democracy." However, another Al Fagr commentator gave mild praise to the Secretary's speech; while an Al Fagr article profiled several Egyptian democracy advocates who agreed that international observers were needed for Egyptian elections this fall. All independent newspapers offered varying, impartial accounts of the Secretary's meeting with Egyptian opposition figures.

3. Iraq: The violence in Iraq reemerged in the pro-government media on June 25. The front page of Al Ahram pictured President Bush and Iraqi PM Ibrahim Al Jaafari at a White House press conference under the headline: "One Marine dead and 19 injured in Fallujah in a dangerous relapse of violence for American forces in Iraq." An unsigned editorial in Al Gomhouriya on June 25 attacked the Brussels International Conference on Iraq for "not pressuring the U.S. to announce a timetable for its withdrawal from Iraq." Former Iraqi PM Ayad Allawi's June 25 visit to Egypt was widely covered the following day. Al Ahram reported on June 26 that, as a result of Allawi's visit, "Al Azhar's Islamic research center will issue a statement urging all Iraqis to support their government."

4. Sudan: Government-controlled media gave extensive front page and TV coverage to Egypt's hosting of the signing of a "Sudanese national reconciliation agreement" on June 19 and the deployment of Egyptian peacekeeping troops to Sudan on June 22. An unsigned editorial in pro-government Al Gomhouriya (circulation: 500,000) on June 19 compared the Egyptian government's bringing together of various Sudanese factions to its efforts in Palestine, stating, "Egypt seeks the unity and interests of all Arabs." Egyptian TV reported on June 22 that Mubarak told Egyptian UN peacekeeping troops bound for southern Sudan, "Your mission is another contribution to a brother nation." Front page photos in the pro-government press on June 22 showed Mubarak shaking troops' hands and waving to them from atop a truck while he surveyed them.

5. Egyptian universities not among world's top 500: Dr.

Nawal El Degwi, an education expert and founder of the private Modern Sciences and Arts University in Egypt, appeared on Channel 2's popular program Al Bayt Baytak ("Make Yourself at Home") on June 26 to criticize the Egyptian private education system. She pointed out that no Egyptian universities were among the world's best 500 universities. "Our private educational system relies on computers, which causes laziness among students," Dr. El Degwi stated, claiming that developed countries need to sell surplus computers cheaply to countries such as Egypt, making them easy for private schools to acquire, which then depend too heavily on them for classroom instruction.

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